

**Venue:**

Community

**Goal:**

Prevent Initiation  
of Tobacco Use

**Activity:**

C2.01.01 Synar  
Compliance Checks and  
C2.02 Retailer Education



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- **Population (Census 2000): 40,740**
- **Total Households (Census 2000): 15,257**
- **Adult Cigarette Smoking Prevalence (BRFSS/ATS 2003): 8 percent**
- **Estimated Number of Adult Cigarette Smokers (DOH 2004): 2,700**
- **Number of Students (OSPI 2003): 4,713**
- **Eighth Grade Cigarette Smoking Prevalence (HYS 2002): 4 percent**



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HEALTHIER WASHINGTON

# Whitman County Compliance Check Program

## Project Description

The Whitman County Health Department implemented a compliance check program that included retailer mailings and trainings and youth operative recruitment and trainings.



### Inputs

#### Rationale

- Synar compliance checks are a requirement of the Washington State Department of Health. Whitman County Health Department created a tobacco compliance check program that includes notifying retailers of the checks, providing retailers with information, training youth operatives on how to conduct checks properly, providing training for retailers who sell to minors, and thanking retailers who don't sell.
- Comprehensive youth access activities have been indicated to be effective in reducing youth prevalence, although compliance checks alone have not.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Community Guide to Preventative Services. Tobacco Use & Exposure, www.thecommunityguide.org

**Target Audiences**

- Primary: Tobacco retailers
- Secondary: Whitman County community members

#### Resources

**Staff**

- One county tobacco program staff and one Educational Service District 101 tobacco prevention specialist were involved in the project.
- Time spent planning, creating materials, mailing, traveling, training youth and retailers, and conducting checks

**Funding**

- State Tobacco Prevention and Control Program youth access funds

**Partnerships**

- Southeast Washington Tobacco Partnership, Educational Service District 101, Pullman School District, Garfield County Health Department

### Activities

1. Teen volunteer compliance check packets were tailored from Seattle-King County's tobacco compliance check – youth training materials available on the internet at [www.metrokc.gov/health/tobacco/volunteer.htm](http://www.metrokc.gov/health/tobacco/volunteer.htm)
2. Teens Against Tobacco Use (T.A.T.U.) advisors invited youth group members to attend the compliance check trainings. Trainings were scheduled at convenient times for youth -- at a four-county T.A.T.U. training, on a teacher in-service day, during lunch hours, and during school hours. A county tobacco program staff member and an Educational Service District tobacco prevention specialist conducted the trainings. At the trainings, lunch was provided along with packets and giveaways for each participant. Pictures were taken at the time of training for retention in files along with completed paperwork.
3. Letters about compliance checks, including *A Guide to Retailers* (ordered from the state Department of Health clearinghouse), were sent to area retailers before the checks.
4. Retailer Compliance Check Training Notebooks and a PowerPoint presentation were created to educate tobacco retailer owners and employees who sell cigarettes to minors. An evaluation of the training was requested from all training participants.

### Outputs

1. Four youth compliance check trainings were held and 19 youth were trained.
2. Education letters were mailed to 51 retailers.
3. Whitman County youth operatives made 13 compliance checks in Pullman, 6 in Colfax, 1 in Palouse, and 1 in Lacrosse. Garfield County youth operatives made 2 checks in St. John and 1 each in Pullman and Rosalia.
4. One sale in Pullman resulted in two follow-up retailer education trainings. Nineteen employees attended the two trainings and the assistant manager joined the Whitman County Tobacco Prevention and Control Advisory Board.
5. Community members are more knowledgeable of the health department's role in compliance checks.

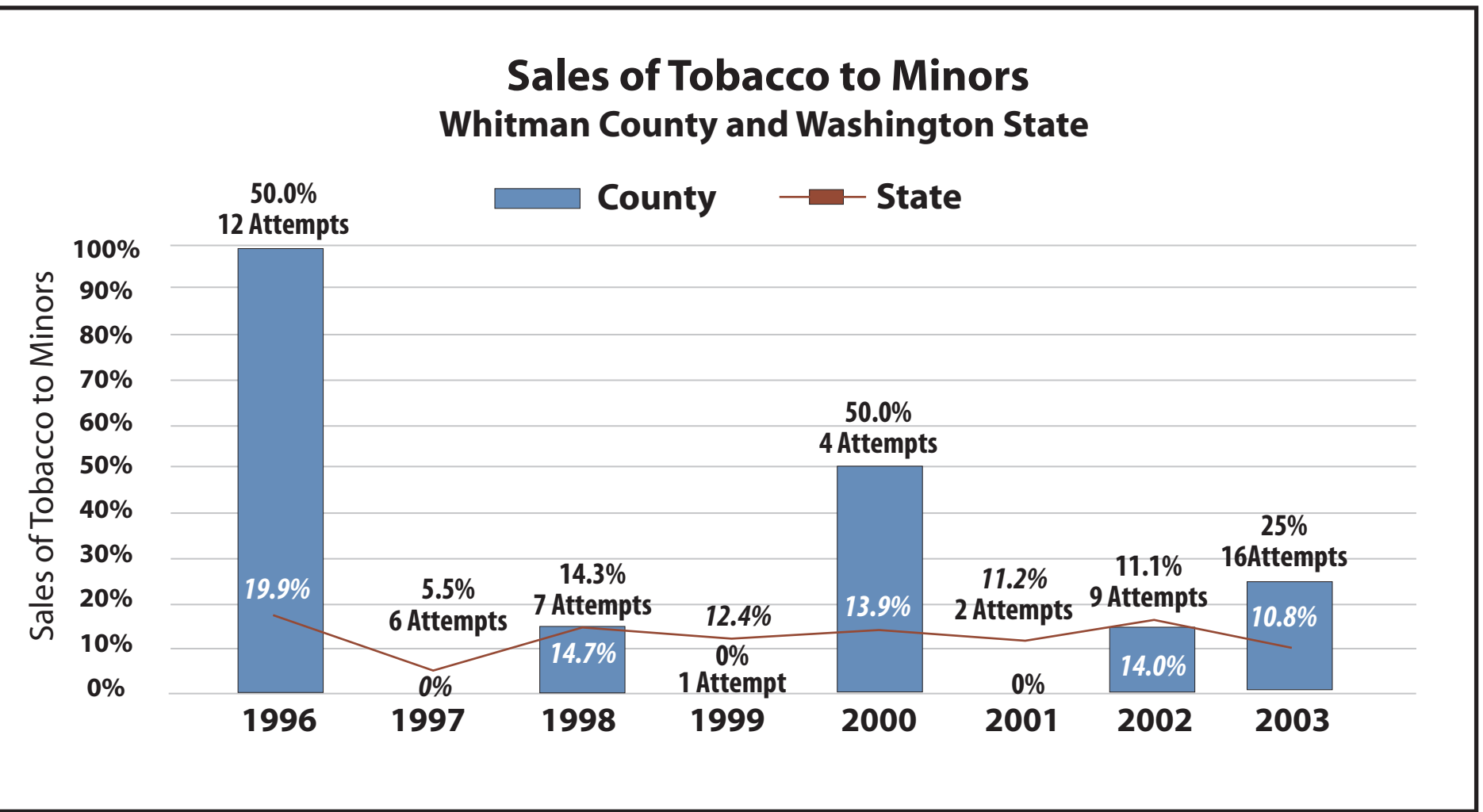
## Evaluation

Employees who attended the retailer education trainings reported:

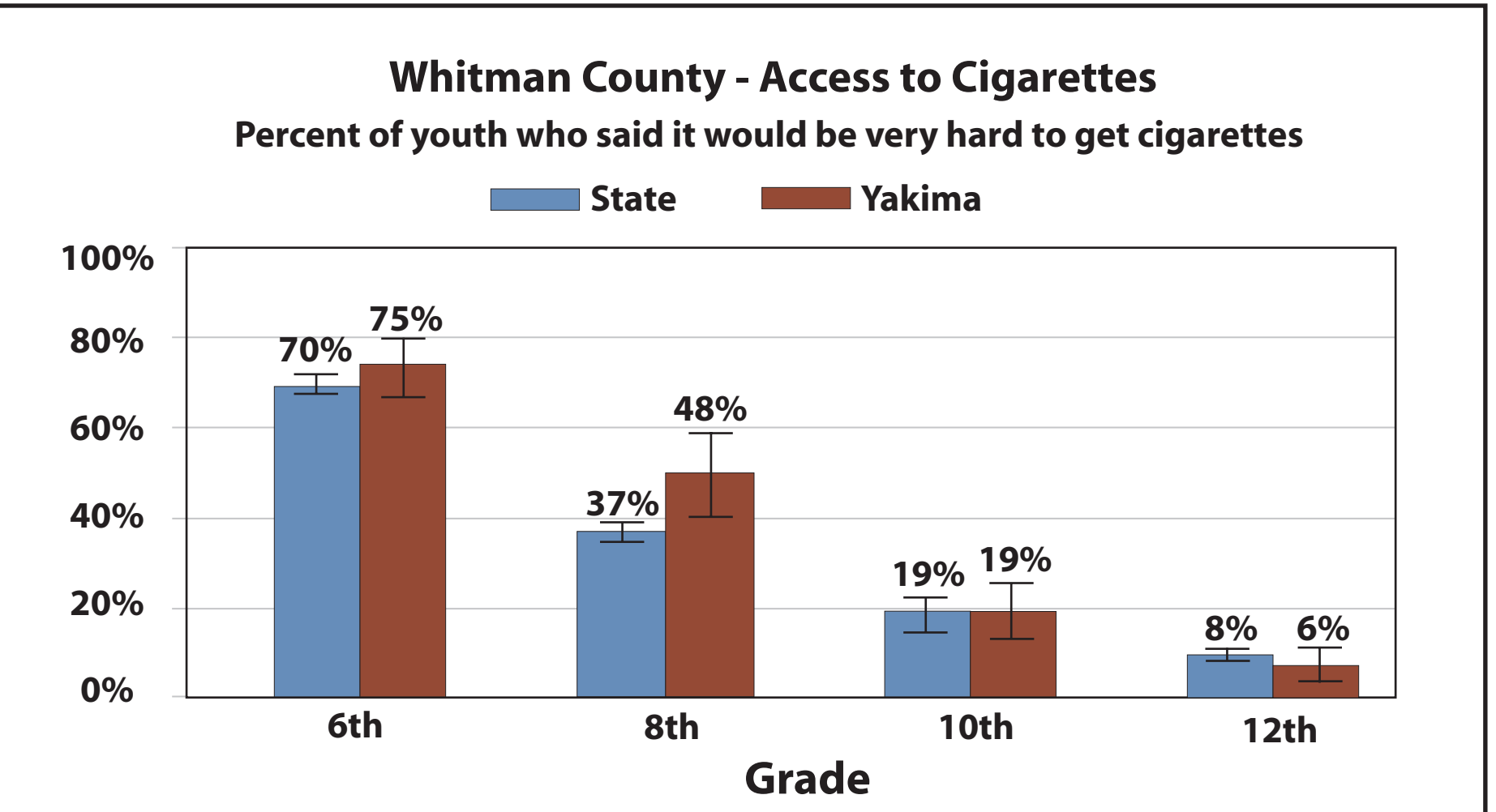
- The training was helpful (74 percent).
- They now feel confident in reading the new state identification cards (100 percent).
- Compliance checks are necessary to control tobacco use by underage youth (100 percent).
- Retailer educational notebooks will be useful as a reference (63 percent).
- Compliance check rates and Healthy Youth Survey data will be used to evaluate the program.

## Lessons Learned

- Allow plenty of time to train youth operatives. An hour is not enough time to make them feel comfortable about conducting checks and answer all of their questions. It is helpful to have youth who already have conducted checks at the trainings to talk about their experiences.
- Educate retailers and others about the fact that youth do not lie to retailers when they try to purchase cigarettes.
- In rural areas, mileage to train youth and conduct compliance checks can be a barrier; I traveled more than 150 miles to conduct three compliance checks one evening.
- Although traveling to the rural areas requires more effort, it is definitely worth it. According to the youth, tobacco products are "easily" purchased in the smaller communities. Youth and tobacco staff are dedicated to reducing sales and are willing to travel any distance.
- Always thank those retailers who don't sell and don't forget to recognize your youth operatives who assist you.
- We would recommend this project to others.



Source: Washington State Department of Health - Synar Compliance Check Database 1996-2003  
Technical note: Data presented were reported to DOH as a result of annual random compliance checks conducted in compliance with the federal Synar Amendment. Additional checks conducted by local health or law enforcement are not included.



Source: Washington State Department of Health - Healthy Youth Survey 2002